

Regional Setting

Beaver County is approximately halfway between Salt Lake City, Utah, and Las Vegas, Nevada. It is within the "Grand Circle" of scenic and recreation areas extending from Utah into Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona.

Interstate Highway I-15 passes through the eastern part of the county at Beaver City and is the main traffic route north to Salt Lake City, about 210 miles, and south to Las Vegas, about 220 miles, as well as to major destinations in between. Fillmore, county seat of Millard County, is just 58 miles to the north; Cedar City is 50 miles to the south.

The Union Pacific Railroad, running north-south through the center of the county at Milford, is becoming increasingly important as a mover of goods and natural resources to and from Utah. Of prime importance is the transportation of Utah's coal to Los Angeles for exportation to the Pacific Rim countries.

Recreation importance of the region is increasing, with growing numbers of tourists attracted to the National Parks and Recreation Areas. Beaver County hosts many travelers for short periods as they pass through to the major attractions of the region. The county itself is also a destination for thousands of hunters, fishermen, hikers, bikers, ATV's, and campers looking for a high country outdoor experience. A major attraction in Beaver County is Elk Meadows Ski and Summer Resort, located just 18 miles east of Beaver.

Historical Setting

First settlers in Beaver County came from Parowan in April, 1856. They built log cabins along Beaver River and began cultivation in the same area. The first town was laid out in the spring of 1858, and, with the river, was named for the many beaver dams found there.

In 1852 lead was discovered at the Lincoln Mine. Recovery furnaces were built in 1858, and the town of Minersville was founded nearby in 1859. An attempt was made to produce bullets from the Lincoln Mine ore, but there was an element in the lead that made it too hard. The element turned out to be the silver that later made Beaver County famous.

An exciting chapter in United States history was the 1875 discovery of the Horn Silver Mine in the San Francisco Mountains of western Beaver County. Mining districts had been opened as early as 1871, but it was the Horn Silver that gave impetus to one of the biggest "rushes" of history. There were numerous roaring mining camps in the San Francisco district, but Frisco (peak population of over 6,000) was the wildest in the West. Mines in the county were heavy producers of gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, and some tungsten.

Because of the mining industry, the telegraph was brought south to Frisco, the railroad to southern Utah, and then the town of Milford was established.

First settlers in what is now Milford took up homesteads in 1880. The town's name is derived from the crossing of the Beaver River by freighters to and from the mines to the west. The term "mill ford" was shortened to the present name.

The Second Judicial Court for Utah Territory was located in Beaver from 1870 until Utah was admitted to statehood in 1896. Beaver, Iron, Washington, Kane, Garfield, and Piute Counties were included in the District. Court procedures brought many people to Beaver from the District, the Territory, and other parts of the United States. Of special note was the trial for John D. Lee, for his participation in the Mountain Meadow Massacre.

The County of Beaver was created in 1886 by an act of the Legislature of the Territory of Utah. Because of the Mountain Meadow Massacre and Indian raids on the settlements, Fort Cameron was established in 1873 by United States troops. The post, two miles east of Beaver, was maintained until 1882. The buildings were then used as an LDS Church school, and later became the site of the Murdock Academy.

The opening of the Newhouse and Frisco Mining Districts had a tremendous impact on the development of Beaver County. The mining camps are now ghost towns, but some of their attendant developments remain key factors today. The mining industry influenced the expansion of a railroad into central and southern Utah. The Utah Central Railroad tracks were laid as far south as Milford by 1880. The Utah Southern and Utah Southern Extension roads were acquired in 1900 by the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Route, which in 1905 completed its line to southern California, and in 1921 was incorporated into the Union Pacific system.

The history of Beaver County is filled with the names of illustrious people. Philo T. Farnsworth, who pioneered television research, was born in Beaver County. Senator Abe Murdock is the only U.S. legislator ever elected from southern Utah. Butch Cassidy was born in Beaver but moved to Circleville while still little.

Until recent times the three main sources of income for the County have been agriculture, mining, and the railroad. Agriculture includes high quality grazing land, a variety of crops that are either consumed locally or transported to other areas, and a sizeable dairy industry. More recently Circle Four Farms has brought to Beaver County a modern swine producing operation. The mineral wealth of the county was of world-wide renown in the 1880's, at its peak. Though now at a more modest level, mining is experiencing a resurgence. Since 1880 the railroad has provided transportation advantages, a steady level of income to a substantial portion of the population, and retirement income for many older residents. Trade and services are increasing in importance, with the development of the tourist potential. The need for outdoor recreation experiences for today's fast paced families is readily available in the Beaver County desert to mountain areas.

Physical Characteristics

The County is 90 miles in length from east to west and 30 miles wide from north to south, with an area of 2,568 square miles. It is crossed by a number of short mountain ranges oriented generally on a north-south axis, the highest being the Tushar Mountains in the eastern portion with peaks over 12,000 feet high. The Beaver River originates in this area and flows in a westerly and north-westerly direction to disappear into Millard County at the southern end of the Great Basin drainage area. The elevation of Beaver Valley in the eastern section is 5,970 feet, while the elevation of Milford Valley in the western portion is 4,962 feet.

Climate

Generally, the climate is temperate and not subject to either extreme heat or cold. There are four well-defined seasons. The sun shines an average of 320 days each year. Precipitation averages 11.65 inches annually in Beaver Valley and 8.5 inches in the Milford area. Snowfall and wells provide additional water, which is always a scarce resource, except in the Upper Beaver Canyon.

In Beaver Valley, June 10 generally marks the end of late frosts, while September 25 is generally the first of the early frosts. Minersville is protected from early and late frosts by breezes from Minersville Canyon to the east, and so enjoys a longer growing season. Late frosts there occur usually before May 20, while early frosts are apt to occur about October 5. Milford Valley is usually colder in its northern portion but varies little in frost dates from the Minersville area.

Average growing season is 106 days, and the mean temperature is 47 degrees F.

Population 6000

The total population of Beaver County has increased since 1991 due to more employment opportunities provided by Circle Four Farms in the west end of the county and Elk Meadows Ski and Summer Resort east of Beaver. Many jobs have just been created at the new county Public Safety Facility/Court Complex in Beaver.